weldon springs

STATE PARK

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WELD
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THE PARK

Weldon Springs State Park is in DeWitt County east of Route 51, 2 miles southeast of Clinton off Route 10. Lincoln H. Weldon gave the park to Clinton on July 6, 1936. The following year, the city acquired additional land and arranged a WPA project which provided many improvements. On July 12, 1948, Clinton gave Weldon Springs to the State of Illinois for a fishing and recreational area.

In 1955 Weldon Springs became a state park under the small lakes program which was designed to make available to all Illinois citizens, within a short distance from their homes, the recreational facilities inherent in a well managed lake and surrounding woodland area.

THE LAKE

The lake was created by Lincoln H. Weldon when he built a dam across a valley traversed by Salt Creek, draining 300 acres. The lake is fed by a number of springs, six of which are near the present shelter house. The 29-acre lake has a maximum depth of 28 feet, an average depth of 10 feet and nearly 2 miles of wooded shoreline. Fish management practices such as the control of submerged vegetation and water drawdowns are used to reduce the number of small panfish and to assure desirable fishing populations.

The land surrounding the lake is rolling with an estimated difference in elevation of 70 feet. The compactness of the hills gives the site the pleasing impression of being more rugged than it really is.

HISTORY

Chautauquas were popular around the turn of the century. A chautauqua was an assembly for educational purposes, combining lectures and entertainment and often held outdoors, modeled after summer schools established at Chautauqua, New York. From 1901 through 1920, the park grounds were used 10 days each summer for this purpose. The first years the programs were presented under a large tent. Several hundred tents were pitched on the grounds and many families stayed the entire 10 days. By 1904 the crowds had grown so that it was necessary to erect an auditorium that accommodated 4,500 people. The building had a diameter of 120 feet.

The chautauqua programs provided some of the country's best talent. William Jennings Bryan was heard four times, Champ Clark appeared twice and other outstanding political figures were William Howard Taft, Vice President James S. Sherman, Senators Robert LaFollette and James Watson, Judge Ben B. Lindsey and six governors.

There was a strong religious tone to the programs. Sam P. Jones and Billy Sunday were among the famous evangelists appearing a number of times. Carrie Nation was presented twice and other ranking women speakers were Mrs. John A. Logan, Lucy Page Gaston and Helen Keller. Every field of interest was represented among the speakers and heard at Weldon Springs were Eugene V. Debs, Dean Eugene Davenport and Captain Richard Pearson Hobson, hero of Santiago.

With the perfection of motion pictures, the advent of the automobile and the general expansion of public education, the days of the Chautauqua became numbered. The last Weldon Springs chautauqua was held in 1920 after guarantors had to make up sizable losses for several years.

FACILITIES

Picnicking: A large picnic area, as well as more than a half-dozen other smaller ones scattered in shady areas, are convenient to parking lots. An unusual feature is the running spring water piped in for drinking. There is a playground and a shelter house.

Concession Stand: In the shelter house and near the boat dock, the concession stand provides a variety of picnicking and boating supplies.

Fishing and Boating: The lake is stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, sunfish, channel catfish, bullhead and yellow perch. There are boat rentals and a boat dock. No gas motors are allowed; electric trolling only.

Camping: A family camping area is available with pads, dump station and limited electricity for trailers. There is a youth group camping area south of the main camping area. All campers must obtain a camping permit from the park ranger.

Winter Sports: Ice fishing and ice-skating are allowed if the ice is thick enough.

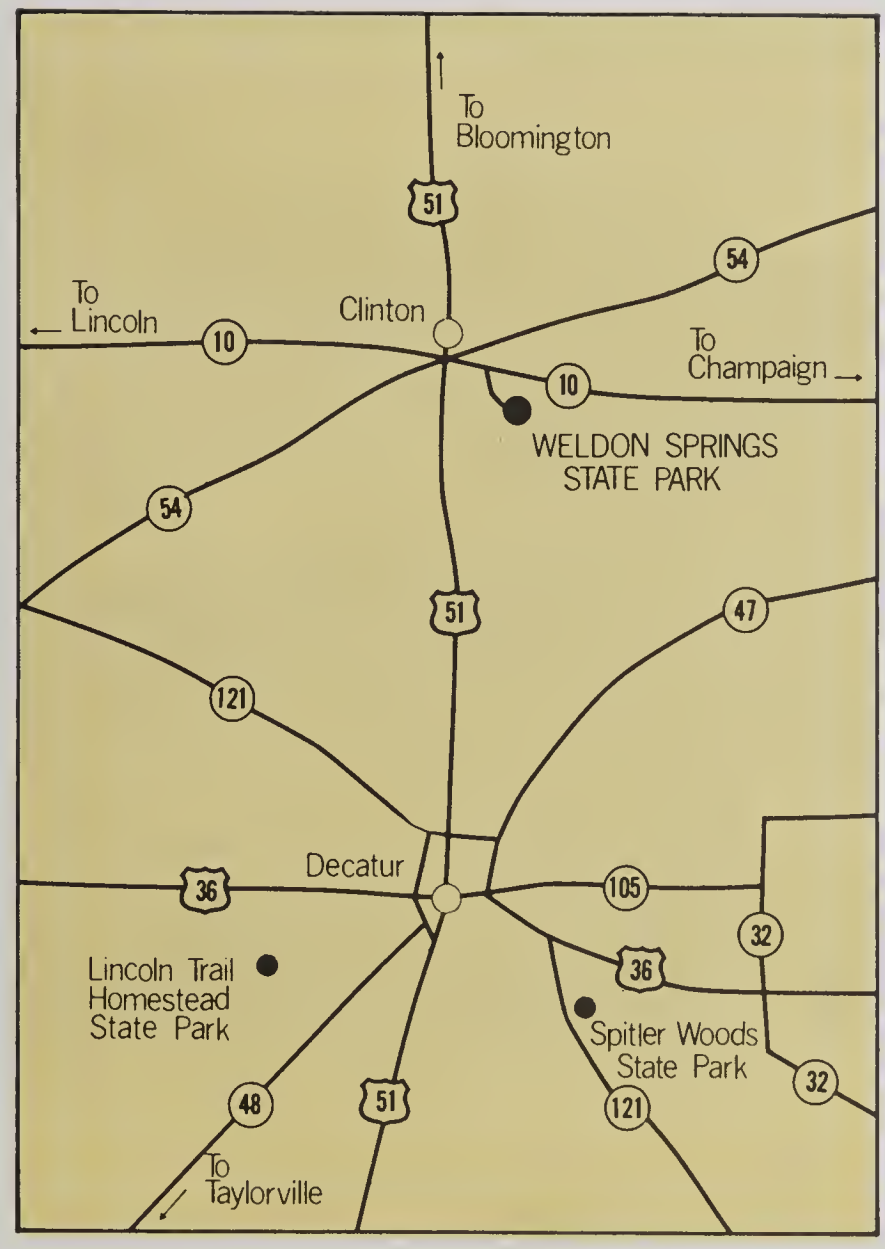
FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . . .

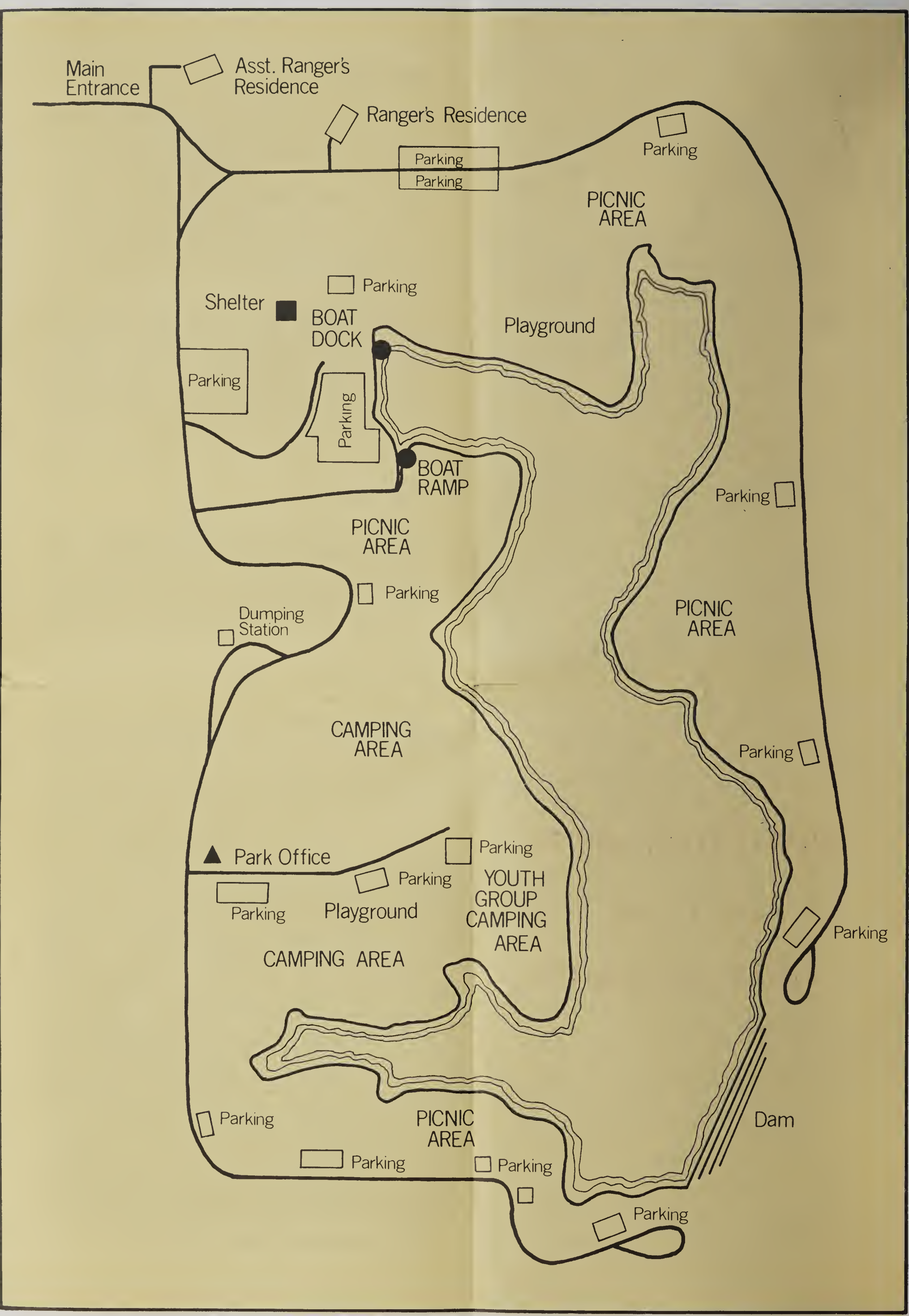
Admittance will not be granted groups of 25 or more persons to any state park or conservation area unless permission from the park ranger has been secured to use the facilities. It is also required that groups of minors have adequate supervision and that at least one responsible adult accompany each group not exceeding 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous state parks and memorials are within easy access of every part of the state. Lodges, cabins and dining rooms are important features of Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, White Pines Forest and Giant City. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

All state parks are open the year round. When weather conditions necessitate the closing of park roads during freezing and thawing periods, access to park facilities is by foot only.

For further information concerning Illinois State Parks and Memorials write to the Department of Conservation, Division of Education, State Office Building, Springfield, 62706.




Main Entrance
Asst. Ranger's Residence
Ranger's Residence
Parking
Parking
Parking
PICNIC AREA
Parking
Shelter
BOAT DOCK
Playground
Parking
Parking
BOAT RAMP
Parking
PICNIC AREA
Parking
Dumping Station
PICNIC AREA
CAMPING AREA
Parking
Park Office
Parking
Parking
Parking
YOUTH GROUP CAMPING AREA
Playground
Parking
CAMPING AREA
Parking
PICNIC AREA
Dam
Parking
Parking
Parking